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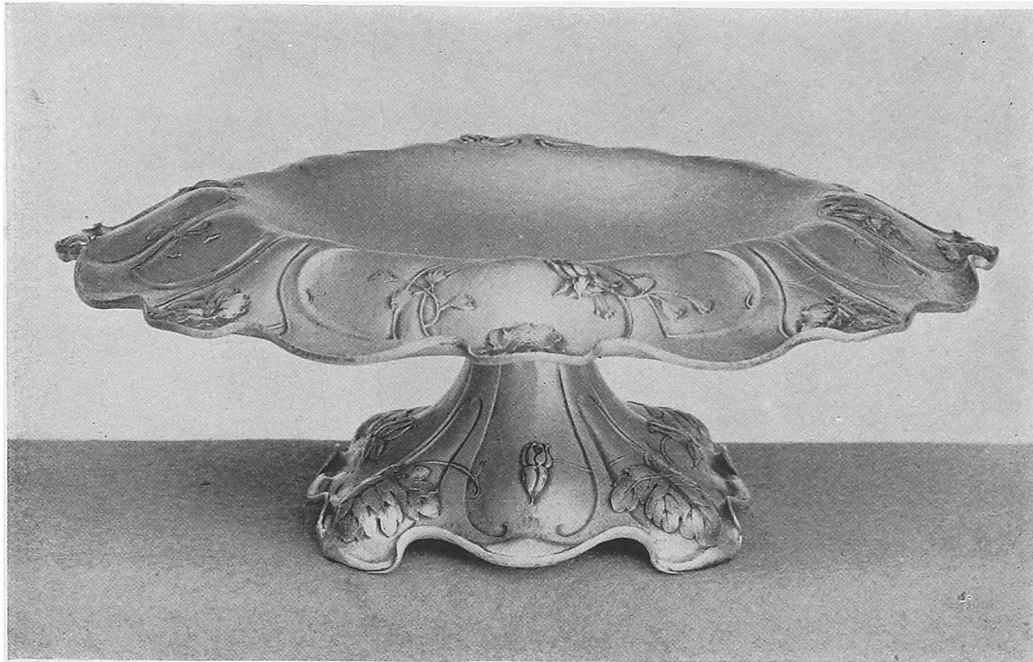
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BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE OF AMERICAN
HANDWROUGHT WARE—VIOLET MOTIF

—Courtesy The Gorham Company, New York

The Modern School in American Silversmithing

CLOSE students of the development of the art of our American silversmiths have been encouraged and heartened by its progress in recent years. The deeply rooted idea that only in Paris and London were practiced those refinements of the art which could gratify people of education and individuality in taste has, by the very nature of the work now created in and inspired by America, been almost completely eliminated.

At the present time, and for some years past, the American silversmith has been standing only too squarely on his own feet. The fact that at every great international exhibition of late years—in Paris, London, Milan, as well as at the great expositions in our own country—the highest possible

honors for the creation of original masterpieces in silverware, masterpieces not only representing that perfection of technical skill for which America has been justly recognized, but of the highest artistic merit as well, have been awarded to America. Perhaps few people among those not students of this art, only one now and again of our lay readers, for example, realize this fact, or have thought at all about the really remarkable strides which have been made in the past decade in America silversmithing of the highest order.

The striking contrast at once apparent in the accompanying illustrations shows very clearly the two extreme lines of development which cannot but emphasize the right of the American silversmith to unques-

MODERN SCHOOL IN AMERICAN SILVERSMITHING



AFTER DINNER COFFEE SERVICE—PEACOCK TAIL MOTIF

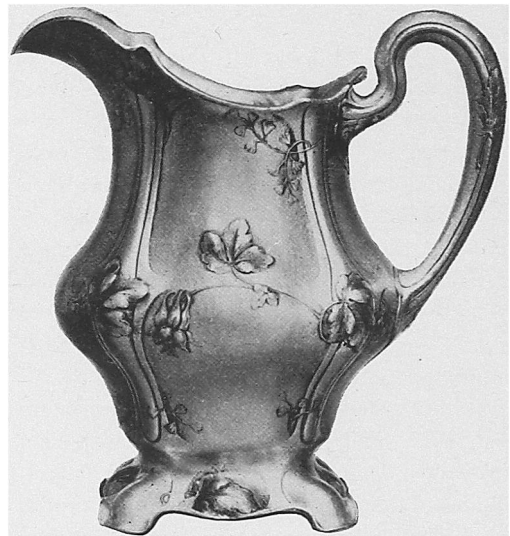
—Courtesy The Gorham Company, New York

tioned recognition as an artist-craftsman of genius, ability, and achievement. Widely divergent in their final expression, there is little similarity in the products of these two lines of development other than their originality. Indicating a conscientious research into the old methods of production, design, form, and decoration, faithful in principle to the fundamental ideals of true beauty, yet original in inspiration, and even daring at times in individuality of conception and stroke, each, in its endeavor to create that which we are told never really exists—something new—stands crowned.

To assist in its most perfect development and final exquisite expression, each method or school has had the advantage of almost unlimited means of every kind back of it. In each case, neither money, the most patient and intense interest in the end sought, nor intelligent direction has been lacking in order to hold for America the pre-eminent right to her artistic triumphs in this one art at least.

Comparison of these two distinct trends or expressions is perhaps doubly interesting and instructive at this moment when the rapidly developing art interests of America are necessarily directed toward the

application of true art principles to utilitarian objects and ends, and a fusing, to some degree at least, of the so-called “fine” and “practical” in art. Upon close study it might almost seem as though the two races—the French and the English—on which our country was primarily founded, have had their respective influence, from the beginning down to the present time, in these



“MARTELE” ENTIRELY HANDWROUGHT IN FORM AND DECORATION—FUCHSIA MOTIF

—Courtesy The Gorham Company, New York

MODERN SCHOOL IN AMERICAN SILVERSMITHING



EXQUISITE EXAMPLE OF THE NEWEST DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN DESIGN IN
SILVER—INTERIOR DECORATIONS

—Courtesy The Gorham Company, New York

MODERN SCHOOL IN AMERICAN SILVERSMITHING



AFTER DINNER COFFEE SERVICE SHOWING
GOOD TASTE IN DESIGN AND TREATMENT

—Courtesy The Gorham Company, New York

ultimate expressions of one of the earliest art-crafts planted in our soil.

The vigorous Briton might well be typified in the substantial, hand-wrought hammered wares. With just a little play of the imagination, this sturdy ware, as one might justly describe it, seems to possess something in its gray contours reminiscent of the rock-bound coast where the Puritans made their first stand. Then comes the additional refinement of ornamentation—varying, in every degree, from exceedingly simple suggestions to the most intricate and lovely trceries of line and composition—indicative of the luxuries and taste which slowly but persistently crept into our lives and habits, culminating in those massive masterpieces which have won their way so honorably in successive competitions in the international exhibitions referred to, and which represent modern America in certain phases of its highest aesthetic development.

The martel or round-faced hammer, with the necessary anvil as a working surface, is practically the only tool used in creating

the hammered or Martelé ware, and its great intrinsic value, as an artistic production, lies in the fact that only the creative genius of the worker—unaided by any design, or pattern, or guide—molds the form and traces out the blowing decoration. Into each piece of this wonderfully wrought hammered silver, our Martelé craftsmen pounds his own living desire for beauty, shaping it into concrete form only by the inspiration and enthusiasm he may feel at the instant of the striking of the blow. These masterpieces are temperamental pieces of work purely, and can neither be copied nor reproduced to order as one might normally expect of any utilitarian object of art.

In delightful contrast to this gray, ornate silver, the other type or development, born somewhat later, seems to represent the feeling and atmosphere of modern France tinged and mellowed with the Colonial and Empire influence. All the refreshment of the most perfect harmony, all the delicate force of untiring attention to minutest de-

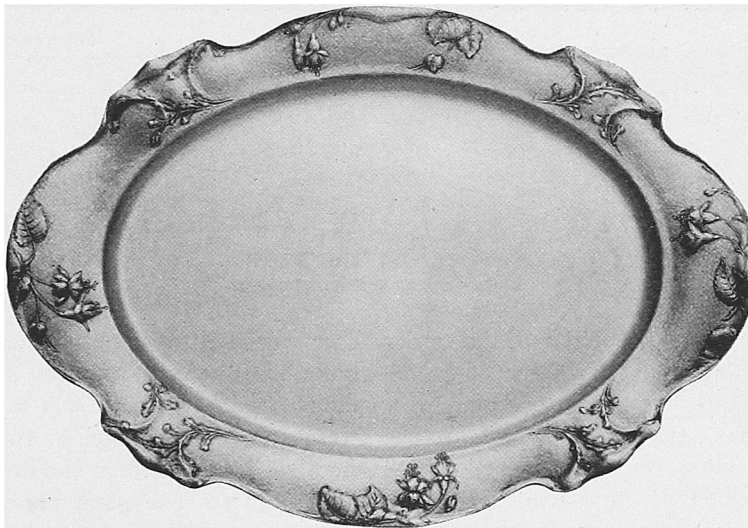
MODERN SCHOOL IN AMERICAN SILVERSMITHING

tail, all the strength of simplicity for which the French people have always stood, this newest note in American silver seems to have inherited, and to hold. Suave of form, yet never once lacking strength, so appealing in its originally conceived and exquisitely handled detail, so harmonious and sweet in line that it is almost a melody, so lovingly and faithfully wrought in its entirety that the instinctive desire to touch it, or hold a piece of it in the hand, is well nigh irresistible—and one must succumb—only to find that in the very contact there is still another thrill!

If the other silverware described be ruggedly reminiscent of nature, then these delicately wrought masterpieces are equally reminiscent of the sophistication of perfect architecture. They seem to be built rather than molded in any way—and if, indeed, as the poet has told us, architecture be frozen

music, these, too, might be so classed. Particularly is this true, perhaps, with respect to the applied decoration. These exquisite bits of frozen thought—to go back to our poet again—wrought with the most perfect nicety of touch, and then applied to their destined resting place with the most devoted and careful craftsmanship, serve, in a quite indescribable way, to make more subtly simple, rather than ornate, the original purity of form. It is an illogical result, most logically conceived.

With such achievements as these to our credit, achievements, although more or less utilitarian, yet embodying every principle of the highest ideals in art, original in inspiration, sincere in execution, sound in every detail, surely we have a right to our unshakable faith in the great future of American art in every phase of its development.



HANDSOME EXAMPLE OF HANDWROUGHT DINNERWARE—
ROSE AND THISTLE MOTIF

—Courtesy The Gorham Company, New York